



News Release

Arizona Department of Public Safety

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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY GIITEM LINKS UP WITH LOCAL AND FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT IN OPERATION "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH"

Massive, unprecedented effort aimed at taking back the streets in Pinal County from violent, warring gang members and drug dealers

On Thursday, Oct. 11, 2007, 17 arrest warrants were served along with the execution of nine search warrants in Pinal County for known gang members, leaders and associates in a massive, unprecedented roundup aimed at breaking up a criminal syndicate responsible for a rising tide of gang-related murders and shootings in the last year. In addition to today's arrests and activities, dozens have been arrested during the last few months as part of the operation.

Operation "Enough is Enough" began during the past year after officers with the Casa Grande Police Department continued to be summoned to numerous murders that were occurring at an alarming rate. The murders the officers were summoned to and investigated were all related to what can best be described as a full-fledged "gang war" in Pinal County that was endangering the communities there. During this process they identified several alleged gang members that helped GIITEM and other law enforcement teams make numerous criminal cases through cooperative work.

The investigation and arrests were made by the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) Gang & Immigration Intelligence Team Enforcement Mission (GIITEM), the Pinal County Attorney's Office, the Pinal County Sheriff's Office, the Casa Grande Police Department, The Coolidge Police Department, The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Eloy Police Department and the U.S. Marshal's Service.

The arrests today are the culmination of a six-month investigation into gang-related violence and drug dealings in Pinal County including Casa Grande, Eloy and Coolidge.

"You can see by the number of agencies involved at the federal, state, county and local levels, there was a concerted effort to target those responsible for the violent crime wave and get them off the streets thereby making Pinal County a much safer place to live," said Roger Vanderpool, Director of the Arizona Department of Public Safety.

"We have not had a concentrated, multi-agency law enforcement effort on a scale of this magnitude in a long time. The Pinal County Sheriff's Office is proud to play a leading role in helping DPS along with federal and local law enforcement in conducting this investigation and

making these arrests today,” said Chris Vasquez, Pinal County Sheriff.

“Drugs and violence go hand in hand. This deadly combination must be met with combined law enforcement expertise at the local, state, county and federal levels,” said DEA Special Agent in Charge Elizabeth W. Kempshall. “DEA is committed to keeping violent drug traffickers off the streets and putting them where they belong—behind bars.”

“Gang violence and drug activity is unacceptable in any community, and had reached dangerous levels in and around the Casa Grande area. It is reassuring to know that local law enforcement can depend on county, state, and federal agencies to pull together in a joint operation to address problems that had become extreme. The City of Casa Grande and the Casa Grande Police Department is grateful to all of the agencies involved in this operation, especially the Department of Public Safety and the GIITEM program. These arrests today will give notice to the gang population that violence and on-going criminal activity will not be tolerated,” said Chief Robert Huddleston of the Casa Grande Police Department.

“Gang members and drug dealers are not deterred by geographical or jurisdictional boundaries. This operation, in which federal, state, county and municipal law enforcement agencies shared expertise, information and personnel sends a message to those who would break our laws and endanger our citizens that such boundaries are not a deterrent to us either,” said Bill Pittman, Chief of the Eloy Police Department.

“Where you find street gangs, drug organizations and violent criminals, you will find ATF agents. ATF is committed to fighting violent crime and making the streets of America safer. ATF shares its information and resources with our counterparts from federal, state, county and local agencies. When law enforcement agencies share information and resources these are the type of results you can expect,” said Jim Needles, Assistant Special Agent in Charge – Phoenix Field Division, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

“The arrests made during this operation will make a positive impact on the community of Casa Grande. It is important that law enforcement and the citizens of the community remain vigilant to ensure criminal groups do not prey on innocent people,” said U.S. Marshal David Gonzales.

“The Pinal County Attorney’s Office will continue to support all of the federal, state, county and municipal law enforcement agencies involved in Operation ‘Enough is Enough.’ I have created a Gang Prosecution Team composed of experienced and dedicated Deputy County Attorneys to pursue convictions and tough sentences for those arrested today and those who are subject to future indictments and arrests. Citizens of Pinal County are encouraged to come forward with information they may have on gang activities. Our aim is to create a safe and secure community for all in the central Pinal County communities,” said James P. Walsh, Pinal County Attorney.

The DPS Gang and Immigration Intelligence Team Enforcement Mission (GIITEM), a major force in Operation “Enough is Enough”, has experienced significant growth in the past 12 months while its responsibilities have also dramatically increased. Today it is a bureau with five districts, 101 sworn officers, and 74 personnel from agencies other than DPS. The GIITEM mission has expanded from gang enforcement to immigration and fraudulent identification investigations. The bureau has enhanced its capability to conduct complex criminal investigations and has significantly increased its emphasis on intelligence gathering and analysis.

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